

The Log of the Seven Bells Club

By Charles Dryden.

In Which Willie Bloke Falls

Down on His Job and Decides to Go Cruising in the Lucy Alice.

A FEW mornings after the rib-stick, debauch on the water side of a wicked city Mr. Bloke emerged from his single front room for a single night, and walked the streets delectedly, with his thumbs rigged out like thumbs, to keep his cuffs from sliding off. It was not the precarious condition of his fingers, frequently on the ragged edge, and faint for want of soap, that harassed the gentle soul of Mr. Bloke. He had lost his job, a disaster that has caused many a better man to limp his life away from the front, in the wake of ship items. But Willie no longer trod the devious path that leads from the pencil to the press, with a fire badge sketched to his port suspender. While the method of his undying may not interest the lay reader, it has much to do with this narrative, and, at the same time, the circumstances of the dismissal of one so talented shows that in the intellectual handling of the internal affairs of a great newspaper justice is sometimes tempered with mercy and wisdom. The overthrow of Mr. Bloke, journalist, came about in this wise:

One afternoon an architect, unknown to fame, telephoned the subeditors of the three San Francisco morning papers that he had completed plans for a new \$80,000 schoolhouse, and would submit copies of the design for publication, in the interest of learning. The editor of the journal for which Mr. Bloke composed labored items belittled him, "phone some better words of reproach to the effect that he was not dishing out free advertising for skate architects, and that the designer could go to the devil with his plans."

Next morning the two loathsome contemporaries printed five-column pictures of the schoolhouse, with copious descriptive matter, in large, fat type, whereupon riot and recrimination seethed in the intellects that molded public opinion on the pages of the defeated journal.

The proprietor and editor-in-chief wanted to know why they had failed to get the news, and the diplomatic subeditor, the one who rebuked the architect, said he would find out at once, and make a trifling example of somebody. So he went for Mr. Bloke.

"How is it," the subeditor demanded, pale with indignation, "that you failed to turn in a picture of the schoolhouse?"

"Which schoolhouse?" Willie faltered. "I wasn't sent after one."

"The editor pointed to the clipped illustrations spread upon the polished plateau of his roll-top desk."

"We've had the points beaten off us by the other papers, and hold you personally responsible."

"But I've nothing to do with the board of education; I don't know the architect, and I never heard of the schoolhouse," the frightened example retorted, with some spirit.

"You live in this district, where they intend to build it, and should have had the picture a week ago," thundered the editor. "You are discharged, sir, for incompetency and dereliction of duty, and—"

"For throwing the paper down?"

"Does that go?"

"It does, and so do you," the editor said, without looking at his victim.

"All right; you're the main squeeze, and I'm a lobster, canned," Mr. Bloke said bitterly. "But I'll say this: You couldn't edit the bill of fare for a five-cent restaurant, and do it right."

"Get out now. Not another word. These dub reporters are enough to drive a man crazy. The news standard of this paper must be maintained, sir, no matter who suffers."

Assuming the air of one who had suffered in excess of his share, the editor chased Mr. Bloke out of the sanctum, and, with this heroic example, the schoolhouse incident was closed, to make way for fresher and more thrilling news features.

Thus it came about that a diffident young man was turned adrift, to roam with his thumbs in the position heretofore described. Fiction and the stage have invested the plain reporter of commerce with abundant nerve and force of character sufficient to break up a funeral in the hope that when he called for the mail the editor might see him, and relent, but the affair of the picture was too serious to be condoned, and Mr. Bloke remained an outcast and a haven of growing disgust.

"I'm up against the real thing," he confessed to his landlady that morning. "The main squeeze got his hammer out for the back talk I gave him. That occurred me in the other office, and now the devil chorus is something fierce. I'll have to fly the coop, that's all."

Though she understood but little of this confession, the landlady sympathized with Mr. Bloke in his sore affliction. He had always paid his room rent—heroinism worthy of a monument should the world of letters ever see fit to honor him.

Willie, however, had daily burdened a column with shipping news, dredged in the best saloons infested by whalers and bay pirates, and "movements of vessels,"

picked up in tugboat circles. As the boy was reared midway between the ocean and the city, he knew nothing whatever of maritime affairs, he found the city front task a source of much private grief.

Mr. Bloke loved to sit on wharves and look about for the last ten minutes, and I admit, he wrote about them. The skippers threatened to shanghai him for publishing plans from the forecastle, and laughed to scorn his weird snarling of nautical terms. He longed to roam—to sail out upon the wave-furrowed face of the deep in a white-winged bark, and think too heavy thoughts, with a streak of poetry in them. The incident in the case of the schoolhouse far down in the South Pacific appealed to one of his nature. He had heard that work was yet undiscovered in that paradise; no dependent females plunging off ferrets at night, and no tramping through mud and wet to ask a red-necked second mate how many tons of coal his vessel carried. The loss of his job further intensified the desire to reach a spot where the prospect of obtaining another was sufficiently limited to render life worth living.

While thus engaged in long-distance eating, as he strolled, Mr. Bloke overtook a tall, wide-backed figure, rolling sluggishly. The stranger carried his mammoth hands open, with the palms aft, and he worked them to and fro, in a rotary motion, like a steamship running under a slow belt. There was something familiar in the shape, yet the outcast did not recognize Mr. Barnacle, able-bodied seaman, until that earnest mariner rounded to a steamship office on Market street. Mr. Barnacle was slightly intoxicated, else he would not have been cruising so far out of his latitude.

"Bloke me down!" he exclaimed, as his nautical eye took in the office front. "Blow me down twice!"

Having delivered this apostrophe to the wind, Bill lurched into the place, Mr. Bloke followed, and seated at the other end of the counter, while the mariner bore down on the man in charge.

"I reckon you know wot's logged in the good book?" Bill queried.

"The clerk noddles to comprehensively."

"Him wot toots not his own horn, like-wise the horn it don't get tooted none."

"Very pretty sentiment, and quite true," said the agent, looking at Mr. Bloke, as though expecting him to hand out a horn to be tooted then and there.

"Barnacle's my name—Mr. Barnacle. Him wot toots not his own—"

"Glad to know you, sir," broke in the agent. "Anything we can do for you to-day?"

"I'm an able-bodied seaman, and I've sailed first mate, too," replied Bill, while his proud bosom rose and fell.

"You're in the wrong shop, my friend. This is a steamship agency, and not a shipping office. If you want a job, you had best go down to the docks."

"Ex-cuse me, but I know my business. Do I look like a duffer?"

Mr. Barnacle placed his right elbow on the counter, with the hand draped over the edge, crossed one leg in front of the other, with the toes resting on the floor, planted his cap over one eye, and, sticking his left on his hipbone, he settled down to await the answer.

"The agent ventured the opinion that Mr. Barnacle in no way resembled a duffer."

"There's a foremost hands as does," Bill asserted, in a satisfied tone. "There may be a B's as a duffer, but I've never yet raised the agent. It's a proper mistake, and I'm here to overhaul the bilger wot painted that scenery you's got stowed there in your forward daylight."

The agent stared mufly at Mr. Barnacle, who straightened up long enough to give his trousers another hitch.

"That scene's all right, as scenes goes, but it ain't shipshape. The artist knowed how to mix paint, and he's put in as neat a bit of brine as ever I sailed on, but he's away to leeward in conception, if that's what you call it. Now—"

"Oh, you're alluding to that large oil painting of an ocean steamer in the window?" interrupted the agent, as a great light broke in. "Why in blazes didn't you say so at first?"

"That's just what I've been chewing about for the last ten minutes, and I ain't done yet. The trouble with you is you ain't dedicated in your business. If you had smelled bilge water as long—"

"Yes, that's a very fine work," hastily remarked the agent. "Cost us \$400. Mr. Barnacle emitted a bubbling whistle."

"Well, the fellow got to windward of you on that tack. The scene's no good. Did you ever count the sailors on the fore-castle? There's twenty-three of them—diddle bodies—leaning on the rail, in regular picture-book style, with go-shore clothes on, and smoking cigarettes. That makes me tired, and it's like-wise a slur."

"Of course, we are willing to apologize, Mr. Barn—"

"Tain't your fault," said Bill, with a gracious wave of his tarry fin. "Blame it on the dock wot made the picture. By rights, there should only be one seaman on the fore-castle—head keeping lookout in a gun coat. Half the others should be having their watch below, and the rest at work in the 'tween decks, scraping rust off the chain cable, or whitewashing the bilges. Then the picture would be shipshape."

"We'll have it altered next week," the agent said, with apparent sincerity.

"I hope you won't take no offense at my remarks, but you see, the way it is now the scene puts me and my mates forward in a wrong light to the public, and it thought I'd have to tell you about it. No offense, I hope."

"None whatever, Mr. Barnacle. I assure you, and we are much obliged to you for calling our attention to this cruel wrong," said the agent, as he smiled a wide, wide smile.

When the art critic, having wholly vindicated able seamen as a class, turned and lurched out of the office, the two young men stood regarding each other as though dazed by the invoice of wisdom so ingeniously thrust upon them.

"Is he a friend of yours?" the agent at length inquired of the outcast.

"I know him slight—that is, we met once, in a merely informal manner. Isn't he a bird?"

Mr. Bloke recalled the rib-stick banquet at Barn's luxurious retreat, and blushed dimly.

"Well, he's an entertaining freak, and no mistake."

"He was full on that occasion, too," Mr. Bloke hastened to impart, lest the agent should infer that in his lucid intervals Mr. Barnacle was a highly improper and dismal associate for any young man.

"And I've always been taught to believe," continued the agent, "that booze exercised a most debasing influence on mankind; but, with your friend, the effect is entirely opposite. His skate seems to have elevated him."

"That's why I like the man," Willie declared, with warm enthusiasm.

The fact did not appeal to him that, as yet, he warranted no particular reason for admiring the able seaman. Being somewhat emotional, the great charter member of the Seven Bells Club formed hasty affections, and, finding that Mr. Barnacle had made an impression on the sordid dealer in steamboat tickets, he was pleased to claim that humble mariner as his friend.

"I've got to see him now on some special matters, so good-day."

With this abrupt farewell, Mr. Bloke dashed into the street. An inkling possessed him that, in some way, the old man might prove useful in the contemplated ocean voyage. Half a block down he beheld the sailor, still elegantly paddling himself along, with shoulders squared, and head erect. The consciousness of a noble deed performed yet infested the brain of Bill Barnacle, assuring that person into the belief that he owned a place in the universe.

Hurrying forward, Mr. Bloke soon overtook his fellow-clubman.

"Hello, shipmate," he said, with great affability, fetching the seaman a flat-headed slap between the shoulders.

"How's she heading?"

"Sonny," replied Bill, slewing about, and regarding Bloke with a triumphant gleam in his half-closed eyes. "Blow me, if you ain't late."

"Why, what's the hour?" Willie asked, for the want of a better reply.

"They got that likewise," said Bill, executing another cunning leer.

"Get what?"

"My watch."

"But your watch. What has that to do with me?"

"Nothing special, I reckon, only I see it fit to tell you I've been vobbing a look in which anger and amazement did a double turn."

Bill, meanwhile, buttoned his coat, and folded his huge arms across his chest, to prevent the long railroad of that valuable garment by some mysterious hocus known only to the daring marauder confronting him.

"Say, I'm not trying to hand you a lemon. We're not here to get a fact."

"Your rig is familiar, that's a fact," Bill admitted, after a bat-like scrutiny. "Wot was you in for?"

"I've not been in, whatever you mean by that. My name is Bloke. Don't remember me at the party the other night, along with that human ruin with the wooden leg—old Tokens?"

"To be sure, chucked Bill. 'Why, to be sure. He ain't out, yet, neither. The skipper paid my fine, with cash down, too.'"

"Have you been in jail?"

"Not? I punched him fearful."

"Who?"

"This here Tokens. After you desert the party, Tokens he allows you're a pickpocket or sandbagger in disguise. You're a liar over all, I says to Tokens, and then gives him a good one over the head. He tries to harpoon me with that timber leg of his, and the table gets capsize. Him and me is still afloat of each other when the crowd comes busting in, and he treats us to a ride in a blue craft with a gear forward, mostly for our health, I allow."

And Mr. Barnacle laughed a thick, rumbling laugh.

"So you really do jail on an account?"

"Why not? He lawgived me proper slanders."

"You are indeed my friend, and I thank you for your remarks, but you see, the way it is now the scene puts me and my mates forward in a wrong light to the public, and it thought I'd have to tell you about it. No offense, I hope."

"None whatever, Mr. Barnacle. I assure you, and we are much obliged to you for calling our attention to this cruel wrong," said the agent, as he smiled a wide, wide smile.

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"Up Against the Real Thing," He Confessed to His Landlady that Morning."

BURNING A SLAVE SHIP.

Little Known Story of the Last Trader Run Into Mobile Bay.

From Harper's Magazine.

Many things can be forgotten in forty-seven years, and probably few Americans remember the story of the slave ship *Clotilde*, that was run into Mobile Bay and burned one dark night in 1859, and how its cargo of slaves was dumped off into the canals and left, some to be picked up and sold, some to wander about and starve, and some to die of homesickness.

Notwithstanding that it all happened close to Mobile, scarcely any one in this year recalls anything of the facts. Only in an old scrapbook of a friend could I find a single printed word about them; and when this friend's daughter had once been to the strange settlement, and had described some of the people's habits of life in a charming little dialect sketch, the dramatic situation seized upon me. A burning desire possessed me to see these remarkable people face to face. A chase followed among the old negroes of Mobile, for somebody had said I would find among them a certain man who knew of the Africans. He also knew the road through the big dark swamp behind the city to the settlement. The fact was kind, and at last I found a white man who, in the old Confederacy days, had often been to the settlement, knew the Africans well, and, in fact, at a certain time had been under his control as a Confederate officer.

A drive of half a dozen miles over an elevated plank road and through a wilderness of trees and water brought us out to the clay hills by the Alabama river.

There was a cluster of sawmills close by in the "pinney woods," and beyond these many negro cabins in rows. But their occupants were the common negroes, working in the mills, and of recent arrival. It was little they knew of the real "Africans" as distinguished from themselves. After much inquiry, and much running about the place, I found the pathetic-looking Confederate breastworks that still stretch sullenly for a mile and more through the woods, we came to a few African houses. They were only dilapidated cabins built by the negroes to truck gardens and rosebushes. Hardly a dozen of the old *Clotilde's* victims are alive, though numbers of their children live near the settlement and have intermarried with the common negroes.

Few of the captured ones had been more than 20 at the time of their enslavement, and all remembered the horrible details as if they had been experiences of a recent time. They were more stalwart in appearance and of finer physique than the American negro whose ancestors have been long in bondage. Their eyes were brighter, too, and their voices even softer and more melodious.

"Who are you?" "The Night Owl's challenge from the gloomy cypress tree; 'I'm the messenger of millions'!"

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BROKERS WATCH MORGAN.

Attempted to Get News of Ore Deal By Use of Spyglasses.

From the New York Herald.

Opera glasses as an aid to stock market speculation, and what members of the New York exchange had first news of the ore deal, are subjects now discussed in the downtown lunch clubs of which brokers and bankers of Wall street are members.

It appears that during the progress of the negotiations, which resulted in the New York exchange ore lands to the United States Steel Corporation, daily conferences were held in the office of J. P. Morgan & Co., at which Mr. Hill, Mr. Morgan, Mr. Gary, Mr. Roam, and Mr. G. F. Baker were frequently present.

It became known in Wall street recently that members of the stock exchange were anxious about the outcome of the ore deal gathered at a window of the exchange directly opposite Mr. Morgan's desk, which is located near a big window. They used opera glasses, much to the discomfiture of Mr. Morgan and his associates. Nevertheless, they progressed with the negotiations, and the ore deal gathered at a window of the exchange directly opposite Mr. Morgan's desk, which is located near a big window. They used opera glasses, much to the discomfiture of Mr. Morgan and his associates. Nevertheless, they progressed with the negotiations, and the ore deal gathered at a window of the exchange directly opposite Mr. Morgan's desk, which is located near a big window. They used opera glasses, much to the discomfiture of Mr. Morgan and his associates. 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